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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 08, 2010

Summary: Coverage of reports that U.S. and NATO forces are set to launch a "major offensive," in southern Afghanistan this week and that Taliban are "ready to fight to the death," dominated front pages in several major newspapers on Monday morning. Some papers focused on the Chief Justice of Pakistan's comments linking speedy and effective justice to judges' being at full strength. Newspapers also highlighted Secretary Clinton's statement, in an interview with CNN, that "Al Qaeda threat to United States is graver than nuclear-armed Iran." Media reported Ambassador Holbrooke's remarks that Washington is not in "direct contact" with the Taliban, as part of its efforts to re-integrate insurgents in Afghanistan. "The News," and its mass-circulated Urdu daily, "Jang" front-paged a report that the U.S. lodged a strong protest with the GOP on the arrest of some U.S. Embassy employees and impounding of their vehicles. Reports of an explosion at a power plant in Connecticut that resulted in killing of up to 50 people received extensive coverage. Assistant Secretary Crowley's statement welcoming the Indian offer to resume talks with Pakistan, saying that dialogue between South Asia's two nuclear neighbors would help bring stability to the entire region received prominent display on Saturday. The issue of Blackwater agents in Pakistan reverberated over the weekend as a NWFP minister Bashir Bilour claimed that Blackwater guards are present in the province to provide security to U.S. officials, and today (Monday) several newspapers reported Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Chief Fazlur Rehman as claiming that 9,000 Blackwater personnel are present in Islamabad. Commenting on the subject, "Pakistan Observer," noted that "one thing stands confirmed that this organization working as an extension of the CIA is quite active in the province (NWFP), whereas another Islamabad-based daily, "Ausaf," urged the GOP to "investigate that who gave permission to this infamous agency to conduct its operations in the country." End Summary.

#### TOP STORIES

News Story: U.S., NATO Plan Big Offensive In Helmand - "Dawn" (02/08)

"U.S. and NATO forces are set to launch in southern Afghanistan this week a major offensive being described as the biggest assault of its kind since Vietnam four decades ago. 'Our basic strategy is, is to reverse the momentum of the Taliban; to deny them control of population centers and production centers,' said U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates."

News Story: Taliban Getting Ready For Major Fight - "Dawn" (02/08)

"Taliban militants are digging in ahead of a major NATO operation in

Helmand province in southern Afghanistan. 'The Taliban are not going to leave Marjah. We have seen them preparing themselves. They are bringing in people and weapons. We know there is going to be a big fight,' said Abdul Manan, a man from Marjah. 'The Taliban are very active in Marjah. They are planting mines there and in the surrounding areas,' said villager Abdul Khaleq after arriving in Lashkar Gah."

News Story: CJ Links Quick Justice To Judges' Full Strength - "The News" (02/08)

"Linking speedy and effective justice to the elevation of judges against vacancies, Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry has said the Supreme Court has no designs to weaken the nascent democratic system as the judiciary had rendered sacrifices to put the country on the path to democracy. He was talking to local lawyers on Sunday at the Supreme Court registry during his maiden visit to Peshawar after being restored as top adjudicator of the country on March 16, 2009."

News Story: Al Qaeda Threat To U.S. Graver Than Nuclear Iran: Hillary - "Daily Times" (02/08)

"The threat of a nuclear-armed Iran is "real" for the U.S., but Al Qaeda poses an even greater danger, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Sunday. 'A nuclear-armed country obviously poses a potential threat,' Clinton told CNN's 'State of the Union,' while making it clear that the Iranians do not yet possess an atomic weapon."

News Story: America Not In 'Direct Contact' With Taliban: Holbrooke - "Daily Times" (02/08)

"Washington is not in 'direct contact' with the Taliban, as part of its efforts to re-integrate insurgents in Afghanistan, United States special envoy Richard Holbrooke said on Sunday. 'The press, since the London conference in January, has been kind of obsessed with the idea that there are all sorts of secret talks going on with the Taliban. So I want to state very clearly that our nation is not involved in any direct contacts with the Taliban,' Holbrooke said at an international security conference in Germany."

News Story: U.S. Lodges Protest Against Police Actions - "The News" (02/08)

"The United States has lodged a strong protest with the Government of Pakistan on the arrest of some U.S. Embassy employees and impounding of their vehicles in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. Reacting to the 'strongly-worded' complaint formally lodged by the U.S. Embassy with the Foreign Office, the Prime Minister has ordered setting up a top-level inquiry committee, headed by the Interior Minister, and comprising three Federal Secretaries as well as the Director-General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)."

News Story: 50 Feared Dead In U.S. Plant Blast - "The News" (02/08)

"As many as 50 people are said to have been killed in an explosion on Sunday at a U.S. energy plant in Connecticut, a hospital spokesman told AFP, adding a search and rescue operation was under way."

News Story: Foreign Operatives Providing Security To Us Officials: Bilour "Dawn" (02/07)

"NWFP's Senior Minister Bashir Ahmad Bilour has said that foreign operatives are present in the country for providing security to the U.S. Embassy, Consulates and Diplomats, the Minister said at a press conference in Balambat on Saturday."

News Story: Blackwater-Type U.S. Security Contractor In NWFP: Bilour "The Nation" (02/07)

"Senior NWFP Minister Bashir Bilour has confirmed the presence of Blackwater in the province and has said that the company is here to provide security to U.S. firms and other non-government organizations, reported a private TV channel."

News Story: Blackwater Goes Underground - "The Post" (02/08)

"Notorious U.S. security agency Blackwater have shifted to an undisclosed place after the debate started in NWFP Assembly about its presence and activities in Peshawar. According to details, during recent session of the Provincial Assembly, members strongly protested over presence of Blackwater in the province. Senior Provincial Minister Bashir Bilour admitted that Blackwater is present in the province but later he revoked his statement."

News Story: 9,000 Blackwater Personnel In Islamabad: Fazl - "Daily Times" (02/08)

"Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Fazlur Rehman alleged on Sunday that as many as 9,000 personnel of the U.S.-based security firm Blackwater are present in Islamabad, a private TV channel reported on Sunday. According to the channel, Fazl alleged that Blackwater was responsible for carrying out Taliban-like terrorist activities in Pakistan."

News Story: Pak-India Talks To Stabilize Region: U.S. "Dawn" (02/06)

"The United States has welcomed the Indian offer to resume talks with Pakistan, saying that dialogue between South Asia's two nuclear neighbors would help bring stability to the entire region. 'We certainly have been encouraging steps that both Pakistan and India could take to address mutual concerns,' Assistant Secretary of State Philip J. Crowley told a briefing at the State Department."

#### TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News Story: School Bombing Exposes 'Obama's Secret War Inside Pakistan' - "Daily Times," "The Post" (02/08)

"The death of three American soldiers in a suicide bombing at the opening of a girls' school in Lower Dir last week has re-ignited the fears of many Pakistanis that Washington is set on invading their country. While Barack Obama has banned the Bush-era term 'war on terror' and dithered about sending extra troops to Afghanistan, a British newspaper (Sunday Times) claims that the U.S. President has 'dramatically stepped up' the covert war against extremists in Pakistan."

News Story: Suspect Accused Of Aiding Bombings: Afghanistan Senior Police Officer Held By NATO - "Dawn" (02/08)

"NATO-led invading forces arrested a deputy provincial police chief they accused of helping place roadside bombs north of Kabul, officials said, in the latest sign of concerns about weaknesses in Afghan security forces. The Interior Ministry, which oversees the police, wasn't informed about the arrest in advance and is contacting NATO to learn what happened, according to ministry spokesman Zamyar Bashary.... NATO did not identify the suspect but said joint Afghan-coalition forces arrested an Afghan national police commander on Friday for illegal activity and corruption in Kapisa and the Bagram district - the site of the main U.S. military hub - in the neighboring Parwan province."

News Story: NATO Chief Urges Better Ties With Pakistan, China - "Dawn" (02/08)

"NATO should develop closer ties with China, India, Pakistan and Russia and become the forum for consultation on global security, the alliance's head said on Sunday, but a senior Russian politician reacted with skepticism. The four countries all had interests in stability in Afghanistan and could do more to help develop and assist the country, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said."

News Story: NATO Chief Wants Alliance To Be Security 'Hub' - "Daily Times" (02/08)

"NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Sunday called for the alliance to boost contacts on global security issues with countries like China, India and Pakistan. Drawing from flaws exposed by NATO's mission in Afghanistan, where it is struggling to hold off a Taliban and Al-Qaeda insurgency, Rasmussen said the alliance should become the hub of a broader security coalition."

News Story: U.S. Far From Winning In Afghanistan' - "The Post"  
(02/08)

"The commander of NATO and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, says the coalition forces are 'not winning' the war in Afghanistan. McChrystal made remarks at a meeting of NATO defence ministers in Turkey, reported private TV channel."

News Story: Pakistanis Doubt Taliban Leaders In Balochistan -  
"Daily Times" (02/08)

"If Afghan Taliban fighters and their leaders are roaming around this remote part of Pakistan as the U.S. alleges, the police chief here says he hasn't seen them. 'Point them out to me and I will arrest them,' Abid Hussain Notkani said. Interviews with residents and officials in and around Quetta reveal widespread skepticism that Pakistan's Balochistan province harbors Afghan Taliban commander Mullah Omar, his aides or their foot soldiers."

News Story: Terrorists Planning To Hijack Plane, Train: Agencies -  
"The News" (02/08)

"Intelligence agencies have warned all the institutions of the government that terrorists, in-group form, could hijack any plane or train or kidnap government official within the next few days to get their demands fulfilled."

News Story: Taliban Kill 'U.S. Spy' In North Waziristan - - "Daily Times" (02/08)

"The Taliban killed an Afghan refugee on Sunday for allegedly spying for the U.S. in North Waziristan Agency. The body of Bakht Jan was found on the roadside at Humzoni, 10 kilometers west of the agency headquarters, on the Miranshah-Dattakhel Road. A note lying besides the body read, 'Anyone spying for the U.S. will meet the same fate.'"

#### POLITICAL ISSUES

News Story: All Issues To Be Discussed With India: Qureshi - "Daily Times" (02/08)

"Pakistan will discuss all issues with India at the upcoming talks between the foreign secretaries of the two countries in New Delhi, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Sunday."

News Story: Taliban Reject Karzai's Reconciliation Offer - "Daily Times" (02/08)

"Afghanistan's Taliban rejected President Hamid Karzai's latest attempt to reach out to them as "futile" and "farcical" on Sunday, but said they were open to talks to achieve their goal of an Islamic state."

#### ECONOMY/ENVIRONMENT

News Story: IMF To Release \$125m Tranche To Pakistan Next Month -  
"The News" (02/08)

"The IMF would release \$125 million tranche to Pakistan next month as formal talks in this regard are being held from February 10 to 16 in Dubai.... The delegation of the World Bank and the IMF will review financial and economic performance of the government in the first six months of 2009-10 financial year. The delegation will also review the targets in connection with the recovery of taxes by the FBR, prices of gas, electricity and petroleum and devaluation of rupee."

#### MISCELLANEOUS

News Story: Iran Orders Higher Enrichment - "Dawn" (02/08)

"President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Sunday ordered Iran's atomic chief to begin higher uranium enrichment, raising the stakes in a dispute with the West days after seeming to accept a UN-drafted nuclear deal."

## EDITORIALS/OPINIONS

Editorial: Killing of U.S. Soldiers, an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (02/08)

"It was a massive attack, possibly a suicide car-bombing, causing huge carnage which included the deaths of the three American soldiers, three school girls, a member of the local security personnel and injuries to about a hundred girl students and passersbys.... The killing of three American soldiers in Lower Dir is indeed revealing, as to the nature of co-operation the United States offers to Pakistan, as they jointly confront the Taliban-led militancy in the tribal areas. But, more importantly, it brings out the magnitude of the challenge, we, as a nation-state, are pitted against."

Editorial: Bilour Confirms Presence Of Blackwater In NWFP, an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/08)

"Though there was no ambiguity about the presence of U.S. Security Agency Blackwater in Pakistan, NWFP Senior Minister Bashir Bilour has for the first time confirmed that it was in the Province providing security to U.S. companies and NGOs. Earlier Interior Minister Rehman Malik had been stating that if established about the presence of the notorious Agency in Pakistan, he would resign. After the statement of an important Minister of the NWFP, one has to see the reaction of Rehman Malik yet one thing stands confirmed that this organisation working as an extension of the CIA is quite active in the Province."

Editorial: NWFP Senior Minister Admits Blackwater's Presence, an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (02/08)

"Senior NWFP Minister, Bashir Ahmed Bilour, has admitted that Blackwater is present in the province. During his recent visit to Pakistan, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates had also confessed that this infamous security agency is operating in the country. These statements from two responsible persons have removed any ambiguity regarding this issue. We think that the time has come for government to expel Blackwater agents from Pakistan, and also investigate who gave permission to this infamous agency to conduct its operations in the country."

Editorial: President's Conditional Offer For Negotiations With Taliban, an editorial in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (02/08)

"President Zardari has said that the government is ready to hold dialogue with the Pakistani Taliban provided they lay down their arms and accept the rule of the law. For the last few years, responsible political and religious circles of the country have been demanding the government to stop military operation in tribal areas, resolve all the issues through jirgas (tribal assemblies) in order to garner tribesmen's support against the militants infiltrating into Pakistan from Afghanistan. Unfortunately, all agreements made with the Taliban could not be implemented due to the government's yielding to external pressure from the U.S. and other western powers. We advise the government to make sure that this mistake is not repeated."

Editorial: Security Forces' Control Over Damadola: An Important Victory, an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (02/08)

"Security forces have secured control of Damadola, a militant stronghold in the Bajaur Agency. This area was under militant control for the last 9 years where they had rejected the writ of the government... It has also been learnt that Maulana Fazlur Rehman held two one-on-one meetings with the President in the last 24 hours. He complained that the government was not taking his demands seriously. Along with Maulana Fazlur Rehman, there are some other people who ask the government to hold talks with the Taliban; but these people never asked the Taliban to lay down their arms. President Zardari has done the right thing by saying that talks are possible only when these people surrender."

Editorial: Lord Nazir Writes To President Obama, an editorial note in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (02/08)

"British House of Lords member Lord Nazir Ahmed has written a letter to American President Obama that Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's trial was not transparent.... Lord Nazir wrote in the letter that two British citizens released from Guantanamo bay gave evidence that they had seen Dr. Aafia at Bagram Airbase. It is height of injustice that first Dr. Aafia was kidnapped and kept for five years and then CIA agents constituted a false case against her.... We do not know what impact the letter will make on the American government, but Lord Nazir has fulfilled his responsibility of upholding human, religious and democratic values."

Editorial: The Verdict's Fallout, an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/08)

"The verdict in the case of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, convicting her of attempted murder, has caused more problems for the U.S. than it has solved. It finds itself held responsible for a poor woman, broken in health, deprived of her children, imprisoned wrongfully before and now facing more imprisonment, highly educated but forced to rot in jail because of her views, which the U.S. has branded terrorist.... The case serves as a reminder that Pakistani citizens were betrayed by their own government, and handed over to the U.S. For that surrender of sovereignty combined with putting its own citizens at risk of torture, no one has been punished so far. The recovery of such persons has not happened, and though it has reached the Supreme Court, only now has the Interior Minister ordered that FIRs be registered. The government must put its citizens first, and must review the relationship with the U.S., which at present does not stop them being abused."

Opinion: Aid Incorporated, an op-ed by Zahrah Nasir in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/08)

"The news that a \$46 million American aid program for the tribal regions of Pakistan has failed, miserably, since being launched with much fanfare two years ago comes as no surprise as, word on the ground, is and has been for a long time now, that residents of these areas, have absolutely no reason to place any form of trust in a nation which routinely bombs them into an untimely future.... It is little wonder therefore, that the innocent 'victims' of American 'aggression' are more than a little wary of aid programs being thrust in their faces by an American contractor, Development Alternatives Inc., the aid arm of the American government itself. On the face of things, perhaps, and this is possible, America is trying to provide a total of \$7.5 billion in development assistance over a five year period in order to offset the damage they have and are doing but, for a proud people to accept 'structural' payoffs for irreparable damage to the fabric of their lives and culture smacks of an additional insult to their traditional pride."

Opinion: Generating 'High-Value Targets', an op-ed by Dr. Khalid Saifullah in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/08)

"Everyone would agree that spotting and eliminating terrorists is highly desirable in today's world of terrorism. Few would disagree that this goal is inevitably linked with another task, and that is the production of these high-value targets (HVTs).... Production of HVTs is an absolute necessity, because on this depends our war on terror - the most important war of our times.... Our present collaboration with the Americans in indiscriminately killing whole families - men, women and children - and destroying their houses, with manned and unmanned machines is certainly a step in the right direction: it assures continuity of their terrorism and our war on terror. This will guarantee the production of HVTs for generations to come."

Opinion: Afghanistan & Faulty U.S. Assumptions, an op-ed by Asif Haroon Raja in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/08)

"Irrespective of sinister designs against Pakistan, overall security

situation in Afghanistan has become so alarming that U.S. leadership can no longer afford to sit back and keep pursuing its single-tracked policy of subduing Al-Qaeda and Taliban through military power and weakening Pakistan through covert operations. It can neither afford to ignore rising power of Taliban and demoralization set in among coalition forces and Afghan security forces. Mounting anti-Americanism and public opposition against war on terror in U.S. and western countries and fast diminishing popularity of Obama are other factors of serious concern. Policy makers inwardly know that troop surge would aggravate rather than placate volatile situation. It has belatedly dawned upon them that war has become un-winnable and unless Taliban are taken on board Afghan imbroglio will never be solved and that exit has become the leading option. Desperate to depart on a winning note, the U.S. military leaders still naively perceive that overwhelming majority of Taliban forces do not back Al-Qaeda or ideologically support Mullah Omar."

Opinion: Iran-U.S. Nuclear Standoff, an op-ed by Afshain Afzal in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (02/08)

"Washington seems much worried about Iran's nuclear and missile program and would resist allowing Tehran to restore old glory of Persian Empire. Every other day Tehran is greeted with threats of attacks and sanctions.... Specifically, focusing on nuclear Iran, why the U.S. is silent and has not prepared an attack on North Korea? What are the guarantees that the U.S. and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can furnish to the masses around the world that nuclear arsenal possessed by North Korea would not be used against humanity? Why only Iran's nuclear program is threat to the world?... When Washington talks of action against nuclear Iran, can it give justifications of its ongoing attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan.... It is the right time for the civilized nations of the world to decide that either world bodies like the UN should be told to windup or allowed it to perform their responsibilities as instrument of peace, without fear and pressure from donors and dictators."

Opinion: The Nuclear Question, an op-ed by Talat Masood in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/08)

"It is envisaged that it is only when the US and Russia have reduced their arsenals that Britain, France, China and lastly India, Israel and Pakistan will correspondingly start reducing their arsenals. In order to influence governments of nuclear-weapon states a worldwide campaign for public awareness has to be started. Interest in reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons must be revived in the public consciousness. Young people are uniquely placed to take the lead. In any case, nuclear weapons are more a weapon of the past than of the future. The time has come for the idea to be concretized to make our world a safer place. As Hans Blix put it aptly, the world has to find ways of moving away from "mutually assured destruction" to an age of "mutually assured stability," however daunting the challenge may be."

Opinion: Fissile Material Puzzle, an op-ed by Khalid Iqbal in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/08)

"Fissile material management is a complex task, its easier said than done. It needs a comprehensive solution encompassing regional and sub-regional dynamics. Once the cause and effect linkages are established correctly, the objectives would be achievable as well as sustainable. The framework of the new regime should essentially be non-discriminatory, based on universal access to peaceful applications of nuclear technology in fields like health care and power generation, etc. Owing to the prevalent world order, America is, certainly, in a unique position to underwrite a viable fissile management regime. However, it must neither arm twist other states to give up their principled stance, nor rush for a half-baked, porous solution."

Editorial: Indian Water Aggression: Government Must Take Decisive Measures, an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000)(02/08)

"Owing to the present water shortage in the county, IRSA's efforts to work out a new water-sharing formula between the 4 provinces have failed. The provinces have rejected the figures given by Wapda.... In 1952-53, when Pakistan faced a food shortage, it was also caused by lack of water. Hence water is a life-and-death issue for Pakistan which needs to be resolved on priority basis. India's Water Commissioner is currently on a visit to Pakistan and will survey several important locations including the Rivers Sutlej and Ravi. Pakistan should be candid in telling him that India's water aggression cannot be tolerated anymore. Pakistan must urge India to abide by the Indus Water Treaty. If this does not happen, Pakistan must consider extricating itself from the treaty as it is creating more problems for Pakistan instead of making life easier."

Editorial: Indian Plan To Build Swalkot Dam: It Is Time To Take Action, Not Just Protest, an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (02/08)

"India has started building another dam on River Chenab with the name Swalkot Dam. According to our investigation report, the dam is 646 feet high which means that it is higher than our Tarbela and Mangla dams and its capacity to hold water is 13 times more than Baglihar Dam.... Pakistani water experts say that if the construction of the Swalkot Dam was not stopped then Pakistan's economy, especially agriculture will be destroyed.... Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi should not harbor any illusion that this brutal and crafty enemy of ours will agree to resolve Kashmir and water issues in keeping with our desire and need.... This enemy should be told in categorical terms that we will go to the extent of waging a nuclear war if it continued with the policy of holding back our share of water because this is a matter of life and death for us."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)  
Patterson